**Name**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

***Plagiarism & TikTok***

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| **Objective:** Develop an argument about whether doing a dance on TikTok without crediting the original creator is a form of plagiarism. |

**Directions:** Answer the following question in complete sentences.

1. The UCLA Office of the Dean of Students defines plagiarism as “the use of another person’s work (including words, ideas, designs, or data) without giving appropriate attribution or citation.”[[1]](#footnote-2) In this lesson, we’ll examine plagiarism in the context of social media. Where have you seen examples of plagiarism on social media platforms?

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***Plagiarism & TikTok* Reflection Questions**

**Directions:** Read the text below and answer the questions that follow. As you read, underline any details that surprise you.

**Context**: Plagiarism is an often-discussed challenge in many areas of the world outside of academic writing. You might have encountered the argument in fast fashion, where companies like Zara often copy or get inspiration from, depending on your perspective, fashion designers.[[2]](#footnote-3) You might have heard claims of plagiarism in the context of comic books, where some writers liberally borrow from others’ ideas.[[3]](#footnote-4) Let’s examine an argument around plagiarism on social media platforms – specifically plagiarism of dances on TikTok.

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| **On TikTok, who owns a viral dance?[[4]](#footnote-5)  “Renegade” and the thorny ethics of the world’s most popular dance memes.** by Rebecca Jennings, Vox  The Renegade is the biggest dance in the world right now. If you’re not on TikTok, you’d be forgiven for not knowing what the Renegade even is. In short, it’s a quick, multiple-step dance that incorporates popular moves like the woah, the wave, and the dab to the song “Lottery” by Atlanta rapper K-camp, and it’s everywhere. Seemingly everyone has done the Renegade on TikTok – except for the girl who invented it.  She’s a 14-year-old in Atlanta named Jalaiah Harmon, and in September [2020] she posted an Instagram video of herself and her friend Kaliyah performing the moves that are all over TikTok right now. A dancer with more than 200,000 followers under the username @global.jones brought it to TikTok in October, but neither Jalaiah nor Kaliyah received credit from any of the influencers who made it a viral phenomenon.  The Renegade is just one of the dozens of viral internet dances whose choreographers have gone largely unacknowledged as they take over the world. On TikTok, where dancing in place in front of a camera has become a **de facto** language for everyone from celebrities to regular teens in their bedrooms, it’s a particularly timely subject. One of the most perennial questions of the past decade on social media —who owns a viral dance? — has naturally resurfaced on a platform where dancing has the potential to make you a millionaire.  Dances are virtually impossible to legally claim as one’s own. The history of copyrighting dance in comparison to other art forms is quite recent: The Copyright Law of 1976 was the first to allow choreographers to protect their work, but even then, it was intended for ballets and other lengthy and **prestigious** compositions. It does not include protections for “ordinary motor activities, social dances, commonplace movements or gestures, or athletic movements” — thus excluding yoga positions, ballroom dances, or, say, a celebratory touchdown dance. In short, it’s why you’re allowed to do the moonwalk and the macarena without anybody suing you.  No one is planning to sue over the Renegade or any single TikTok dance, probably. The debate around who owns a viral dance, at least on TikTok, is more about crediting **etiquette**. When a popular TikTok celebrity does a dance, do they have the obligation to tag the less-famous person who invented it?  It’s a persistent question on the app, one that even celebrities have weighed in on: 17-year-old Disney Channel actress Skai Jackson recently asked why it was important to credit viral dance creators since “you should be happy that millions of people are doing the dance lol.” Creators, meanwhile, responded that artistic credit “translates to massive opportunities for creators if the right people know who did it.”  Part of the difficulty in crediting dancers is **endemic** to the TikTok platform. On TikTok, it’s supremely difficult to determine whose video came first. The feed is not chronological, timestamps are not included with videos, and hashtags are sorted by popularity, not time. That means that if someone with more followers steals your dance, it’s likely theirs will be the one that blows up.Musical artists, on the other hand, have madefortunesaftergoingviralonTikTok, in part because TikTok’s ability to add and save sounds make it (for the most part) clear whose song is in the background.  It’s different on other major platforms. Twitter, for example, clearly shows the date at which a tweet was posted, and a search bar that makes it easy to suss out tweet-stealers. Tumblr’s reblog function and Facebook’s share settings allow people to repost content on their own feeds while still giving credit to the original creator.  **de facto**: existing or happening even if not formally recognized  **prestigious**: highly respected; having a reputation of high quality  **etiquette**: rules; the proper way to do something  **endemic**: belonging to a particular field or to a specialized area |

1. Is copying a dance on a social media platform without giving credit to the original creator an example of plagiarism? Explain your thoughts. If you think it *is* an example, is there a way to mitigate this?

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1. What is the counterargument to what you wrote in question 2? Does this resonate with you?

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***Plagiarism* *& TikTok* Reflection Questions (Continued)**

1. Have you witnessed instances that might be considered plagiarism on a social media platform? Describe one of those instances.

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1. Is copying someone’s TikTok dance an example of cheating/stealing? Explain.

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1. Beyond issues of legality, are there issues of integrity involved in borrowing and/or adapting someone else’s ideas? As a person of integrity, what should your rules of thumb be? What are the benefits of showing integrity in sharing and referencing others’ ideas? Your response should be 4-5 sentences.

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1. UCLA. “Glossary of Terms.” Accessed April 5, 2022. <https://guides.library.ucla.edu/bruin-success/definitions> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Nicole Puglise, “Fashion brand Zara accused of copying LA artist’s designs.” *The Guardian, July 21, 2016,* <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2016/jul/21/zara-accused-copying-artist-designs-fashion> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. George Gene Gustines, “Comic Book Writer Accused of Plagiarism.” *The New Yourk Times, March 2, 2010,* [*https://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/03/books/03arts-COMICBOOKWRI\_BRF.html*](https://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/03/books/03arts-COMICBOOKWRI_BRF.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Rebecca Jennings, “On TikTok, who owns a viral dance?” *Vox, February 4, 2020,* <https://www.vox.com/the-goods/2020/2/4/21112444/renegade-tiktok-song-dance> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)